

Chapter III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF YOUTH ACTIVISM IN ASSAM

In the previous discussion in the Chapter I it was apparent that youth played major role and youth participation and leadership at many times had been crucial in community change in all around the world.¹ At the same time, it was also obtained that any movement organized and led by youth could not have been possible without youth activism. Since youth activism is found to be a prominent feature in the politics of Assam for quite some time now, it is necessary to examine the previous background of such activism in the state. Apurba K. Baruah² points out that inspite of apparent significance of such activism in the state politics it has not been adequately studied particularly from the historical point of view. He observes that although attempts have been made at stating historical facts and assembling official information on such explanation but such attempts are poor in theoretical formulation. At the same time, he also finds that the studies on student movements in the region do not reflect any awareness of the contemporary discussions on the approaches to the study of such movements. Although two major books on student movements in Assam were published by two historians but while discussing S. Bora's³ book on *Student Revolution in Assam*, Baruah states that the book remains a chronological account of the events without conceptualization and theorization of student movements in the state. Her work also proves to be conceptually poor because she uses the word student revolution as the term revolution has a predominant and

¹ For a detailed discussion on the role of youth in different movement's through participation and leadership which became vital in community change in all around the world, see Chapter I, pp. 1-12.

² Apurba K. Baruah, "Approaches to the Study of Student Movements in North-East India", in Apurba K. Baruah, (Ed.), 2002, *Student Power in North-East India*, New Delhi: Regency Publications., pp. 1-20.

³ S. Bora, 1992, *Student Revolution in Assam 1917-1947*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

specialized political meaning relating a major social disruption followed by a wholly new social order and accordingly, any agitational activity cannot be termed as revolution. Other major work *Student Movement of Assam* by another historian Meeta Deka⁴ also suffers from the tendencies of chronologically arranging officially recorded facts and remains firmly with the tradition of history writing and mere statement of facts. Baruah views that this work also shows theoretical innocence in the study of student movements of Assam.⁵ Therefore, it is evident that the discussions on student movements of Assam appear total theoretical void. This chapter will try to understand the historical background of youth activism in Assam. An attempt will be made to study youth activism of Assam on the basis of an emphasis on various kinds of activism in matters of association building, interest articulation, opinion building and agitational. However, this we will do not according to chronology but according to theme.

In Assam, it was found that the beginning of the student activism could be traced back to the period when the Assamese students consciously made up their mind for the social, cultural and intellectual uplift of the Assamese culture.⁶ Apurba K. Baruah points out that with the beginning of the formal education after the coming of the British, the group namely student was formed and this newly educated young people became able to participate in politics than their illiterate elders. Before the coming of the western missionaries and the beginning of the colonial administration in Assam, it was found that under the *Ahom* rule schooling was minimal and restricted to training individuals interested either in employment in the royal court and or in membership of religious

⁴ Meeta Deka, 1996, *Student Movements in Assam*, New Delhi: Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

⁵ Apurba K. Baruah, "Approaches to the Study of Student Movements in North-East India", in Apurba K. Baruah, (Ed.), 2002, *Student Power in North-East India*, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-21.

⁶ S. Bora, 1992, *Student Revolution in Assam 1917-1947*, *op.cit.*, p.1.

institutions and traditions.⁷ Reference could be made to S.N. Sharma who commented on the formal education in medieval Assam stated that during *Ahom* period formal education was imparted in *tols* and *pathsalas* which was mainly confined to the upper stratum of the society-to the *Brahmanas*, the *Kayasthas* and the *Kalitas*.⁸ It must be noted here that the western education began in India in the last part of rule of British East India Company. Warren Hastings established one *Madrassa* (religious educational institution) in 1781 in *Calcutta* and one *Sanskrit* College was established at *Kashi* by the residents of *Kashi* with the support of Lord Cornwallis in 1791. The establishment of Fort William College in *Calcutta* in the year 1801, Bishop College in 1820 in *Calcutta*, Hindu College in 1816 again in *Calcutta* with the initiative of David Hair and Sir Hyd East and Raja Ram Mohan Roy which in the course of time became well-known as the Presidency College contributed highly to the spread of western education in the country. However, the Presidency College was established with the initiative of non-governmental sources. Be that as it may, the company sanctioned Rs. 1 *lakh* yearly to invest in educational purpose in 1813 which went to the “Book Society” and “School Society” of *Calcutta*. Afterwards, Company started two colleges in *Calcutta* in 1824 and in *Delhi* in 1825 respectively. Under the guidelines of the Report of Mackley Sahaab (Sir Mackley) Indian educational-system was announced in 1835 during the period of Lord Bangtinct. Under this announcement grounds were prepared for teaching English education and establishment of district schools in every district. This led to the establishment of first district school (now High School) in Assam in 1835. People were initially suspicious of the institution

⁷ Apurba K. Baruah, “Approaches to the Study of Student Movements in North-East India”, in Apurba K. Baruah, (Ed.), 2002, *Student Power in North-East India, op.cit.*, pp. 1-2.

⁸ S.N. Sharma, “Education”, in H.K. Barpujari, (Ed.), 2007, *The Comprehensive History of Assam Modern Period: Yandabo To Diarchy 1826-1919*, Vol. IV, Guwahati: Publication Board of Assam, p. 299.

of the school in the province because this was established after the extinction of older educational system and the gap of having no educational system for fifteen to twenty years. However, within a few period of time the educational institution was welcomed by people of the state. Company withdrew the recognition of Assamese language towards the end of 1836 and Bengali language was prevalent in the state which opposed the principles of the Indian educational system of 1835.⁹ In this context, Hiren Gohain observed:

The British colonial rulers introduced Bengali in 1837 not out of their interest in any language dispute but for administrative convenience only as they were introducing new land laws, law-courts and official procedures in Assam. Bengali had already been in use in Bengal for those purposes and Britishers thought that it was more economical to use that ready-made instrument.¹⁰

However, with the coming of the American Baptist Mission which came here for spreading Christianity amongst the people of the state through mother tongue published books on Grammar and dictionary in Assamese with the help of some local people. At the same time, Late Aatmaram Sharma also translated Bible into Assamese language. With the establishment of *Calcutta* University in 1857 many students of Assam were started taking higher education in *Calcutta*. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan (1829-58), English educated progressive Assamese youth took admission in *Hindu College of Calcutta* in 1841 who realized the pitiable condition of his mother tongue and the state. Although in 1872 Assamese language received recognition in the states' schools and courts during the period of Campbell Sahaab (Sir Campbell) but the state of the Assamese language continued to be the same as before in the state. However, the Assamese students in

⁹ Biswanarayan Shashtri, "Bhumika", in Atul Chandra Hazarika, (Ed.), 1960, *Bhasan Mala: Collection of Addresses to Assam Chatra Sanmilan*, Guwahati: Publication Board Assam.

¹⁰ Hiren Gohain, 1980, *On the Present Movement in Assam*, Calcutta: Sribhumi Publishing Company, p.14.

Calcutta realized this condition of their mother tongue and the respect towards their motherland and language helped them to form organization to work for the promotion of the Assamese language. Moreover, the spreading of the western education also inspired the students to fight for the establishment of higher educational institutions in the state.¹¹ However, the British government and the missionaries started the English schools and printing presses spreading western education and the ideas among the people of the state during the mid-nineteenth century.¹² It was viewed that the preparatory ground for florescence of Assamese literature was started by the Assamese Baptists namely Nathan Brown (1807-86) who wrote the first grammar of Assamese language in 1848 and Miles Bronson (1812-93) who completed and published the first Assamese lexicon in 1867. The first magazine cum newspaper *Arunudo* (1846) by disseminating western thought and learning¹³ “inspired the younger generation of the Assamese and paved the way for an intellectual awakening”.¹⁴ The elementary schools were established and text books in Assamese were written by the Baptists. The translation of Bible into Assamese, classics like Pilgrim’s Progress, stories having religious bias, *Kamini Kantor Charitra* (1877), *Alokeshi Vesyar Kotha* (1877) and *Phulamoni Aru Karuna* were found opening door to the west and brought about renaissance in Assamese literature. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan showed his advanced, liberal and ardent patriotism in the representation to Mills in “Observation in the Administration of Assam” and in his several articles in *Arunudo*. Moreover, *A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language and on Vernacular Education*

¹¹ Biswanarayan Shashtri, “Bhumika”, in Atul Chandra Hazarika, (Ed.), 1960, *Bhasan Mala: Collection of Addresses to Assam Chatra Sanmilan*, *op.cit.*

¹² S.L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., p.510. (Reprint)

¹³ H.K. Barpujari, (Ed.), 2007, *The Comprehensive History of Assam Modern Period: Yandabo To Diarchy 1826-1919*, Vol. V, 3rd Edition, Guwahati: Publication Board Assam, p. 218. (Reprint)

¹⁴ D. Neog, 1962, *New Light on the History of Asomiya Literature*, Guwahati: Suwoni Prakash, pp.360-1.

(1855) wrote in the name of a “Native” established the separate identity of the Assamese language and *Asomiya Lorar Mitra* in two parts (1859) by Dhekial Phukan contributed immensely to the renaissance in Assamese literature. Dhekial Phukan was followed by Hemchandra Baruah (1835-06) and Gunabhiram Baruah (1839-94) who wrote *Grammer of Assamese Language* (1856), *Hem Kos* (1900), *Kaniyar Kirtan* (1861) and *Assam Buranji* (1884), *Anadaram Dhekial Phukanor Jivan Charitra* (1880), *Ram Navami Natak* (1851) respectively gave Assamese language and literature a firm base. Hem Chandra Baruah’s the *Assam News*, a magazine cum newspaper and *Asam Bandhu* edited by Gunabhiram covered all aspects while dealing with political, religious, literary, economic and social life of the Assamese during the last three decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Accordingly, it was seen that with the spread of formal education amongst a handful Assamese youth and the renaissance in Assamese literature dealt with the matters of public interest thereby laying the foundation of youth activism in the state. It was found that a small-number of educated youth belonging to upper-caste families mostly of lawyers and government servants occupied a leading position in the Assamese society. The handful educated youth of Assam were engaged in services although the British Government recruited the unemployed educated Bengalis in the state offices at a minimum cost. This act of the British did not affect the employment of Assamese youth in the state because they were very few in numbers and there was no higher educational institutes established in Assam till that period. However, the engagement of Assamese land-owning upper caste in clerical and labour supervising jobs in the tea-gardens, the steamer company, the railways, the post and telegraph communication and also as

¹⁵ H.K. Barpujari, (Ed.), 2007, *The Comprehensive History of Assam Modern Period: Yandabo To Diarchy 1826-1919*, Vol. V, *op.cit.*, pp. 218-20.

mouzadars (head of the locality in a district) and *mandals* (head of the subdivision administrative units) etc., prepared the ground for the growth of an indigenous middle class. At the same time, a new brand of western-educated enterprising young men were engaged in business which belonged to upper caste gentry soon became the dominating section of the new middle class. This new young group of people comprising of government servants, lawyers and tea-planters were connected with the rural peasants who critically supported the British rule. This section of people was found struggling to pursue their own class-interests after their betrayal of the economic movements of the rural people. The recognition of Assamese as the language of court and schools in 1873 led them to express themselves through literary and political organizations. They put pressure on the government to provide educational facilities for Assamese students itself through mobilizing public opinion.¹⁶ The group pursued literary activities by keeping contact with the literary figures of Bengal also cultivated new tastes and acquired new refinements. They also expressed their wishes in a fresh nationalist vocabulary which also appealed masses. Meanwhile, the nationalist and liberal ideas of the west were being spread through the beginning of the English education in the state. Youths receiving higher education in English were found engaging themselves in different professions thereby assuming new role in the intellectual field and disseminating new ideas among their contemporaries during that period. Reference could be made to Anandaram Baruah, the fifth Indian and the first Assamese Indian Civil Servant, Bolinarayan Bora, an England educated engineer, Zalnur Ali and Sibram Bora, students of Indian Medical Service fought for establishing higher educational institutes in the province.¹⁷ It was also

¹⁶ S. L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam, op.cit.*, pp. 510-12.

¹⁷ S. L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam, op.cit.*, pp. 510-12.

viewed that the Assamese middle class¹⁸ learnt the basics of politics for the first time during the same period in Calcutta. However, the students who went for higher study were the pioneers of modern Assamese middle class. Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan who was an official of the British Government accepted the capitalist development of Assam under the British rule. He believed that only with the help of British Government the growth and development of *swadesh* (one's own country) was achievable. Though some young people came out to take advantage of facilities offered by Britishers however, they could not understand that under British capital the *swadeshi* (something of one's own country) capital could not flourish. Be that as it may, some Assamese youth were found starting tea and wood business in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, with the greeting of the Assamese middle class the Britishers in Assam started tea, coal and oil business in the state thereby exploiting the state economy.¹⁹ While not being able to compete with the British capital some middle class youth were also found joining jobs and other businesses sometimes with the help and support of British Government. After Ruseswar Baruah and Ganga Govind Phukan sold their tea-estates to the British after the economic crisis of 1866, during that period two educated youths of Assam namely Jagannath Baruah (1851-1907) and Manik Chandra Baruah (1851-1915) were found entering into the social and political field of the state with the certificate of Britishers. Jagannath and Manik Chandra went to *Calcutta* after finishing F.A. examination in the year 1870.²⁰ It was known that the students who went for study in *Calcutta* during that period formed *Asomiya Chatra Sanmilani* (convention of Assamese students) in the year

¹⁸ See for the historical evolution of middle class in Assam, Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, Guwahati: Lawyers' Book Stall. (Reprint) Also see Manorama Sharma, 1990, *Social and Economic Change in Assam: Middle Class Hegemony*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

¹⁹ Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, *ibid.*, p.212.

²⁰ Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, *ibid.*, pp. 212-16.

1869. With the initiative of Ganga Govinda Phukan, that *Sanmilani* (convention) took the shape of *Asomiya Sahitya Sabha* under the leadership of Jagannath and Manik. However, the *Sabha* was formed under the initiative of Ganga Govind Phukan in 1872.²¹ In this context, Jatindra Nath Goswami maintained that:

“The Sabha (meeting) of Asomiya students of Calcutta took the shape of “Asomiya Sahitya Sabha” with the suggestion of Ganga Govinda Phukan in January, 1872.”²²

The growth and development of activism amongst the youth was shown through the platform of *Asomiya Chatror Sahitya Sabha* (the literary organization of the Assamese students) which was evident in their request paper to the newly appointed British Viceroy Lord Northbrook. The request paper contained their demand to connect Assam with West Bengal through railway line so that the state could avail the resources of the country and obtain a high position in competition with her sister provinces.²³ This illustrated the rise of youth activism through association building which showed their capability of a decision-maker during that particular period of history. However, the reduction of age from 21 to 19 for the Indian Civil Service Examination and the Press Act for containing control over national newspapers during the tenure of British Viceroy Lord Litton also invited soaring public opinion in the country and particularly in West Bengal. At the same time, as most of the Assamese students were residing and receiving education in Bengal therefore, the awakening amongst the students of Bengal also affected the Assamese students. Moreover, it was found that the letter of Allan Octavian

²¹ Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, *op.cit.*, pp. 215-16.

²² Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, *ibid.*, p. 216.

²³ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, Nalbari: Samanway Granthalay, p. 8.

Hume on 1st March, 1883 addressing the students of *Calcutta* University also influenced the Assamese students studying in *Bengal* which was evident in Chandra Kumar Agarwala's life history stated by Omeo Kumar Das.²⁴ At the same time, with Allan Octavian Hume's effort Indian National Congress was born which had a deep impact on Calcutta as the presidency town. Accordingly, it also influenced the Assamese students of Calcutta amongst whom Chadrakumar Agarwala (1867-1938) and Lakshminath Bezbaruah (1868-1919) were the foremost.²⁵ Apurba K. Baruah pointed out that the first generation of the newly educated young people organized and led almost all socio-political organizations of the early modern period in the province. This group of young people joined the learned professions under British administration after completing their studies outside their own states. However, this newly enlightened group of people also received support from the students of high schools and colleges.²⁶ Assamese student's activism was clearly reflected through their effort for the advancement of the Assamese language and literature. The setting up of the "*Asomiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha*", in 1888, an organization for the development of the Assamese language by the Assamese students of Calcutta through which progressive and pragmatic ideas of the Assamese students were replicated. The *Sabha* was formed for the growth of the Assamese language which inspired the Assamese students to set up a field to promote confidence and responsibility amongst them.²⁷ In the first meeting of the *Sabha* held in Calcutta on 25th August, 1888 it was stated,

²⁴ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, p.9.

²⁵ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *ibid*, p. 11.

²⁶ Apurba K. Baruah, "Approaches to the Study of Student Movements in North-East India", in Apurba K. Baruah, (Ed.), 2002, *Student Power in North-East India*, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

²⁷ S. Bora, 1992, *Student Revolution in Assam 1917-1947*, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-5.

Assamese is actually used in all grades of schools and Assamese children are provided all facilities to study their own mother tongue in order to develop a standard language all through Assam.²⁸

The establishment of the *Sabha* was regarded as the landmark in the history of Assamese language and literature. The role of the students in this *Sabha* was remarkable which showed activism of association building kind. The *Sabha* published an inclusive list of Assamese books including both old and new. At the same time, the literary activities and programme of the association were successfully carried out by the different branches of *Sabha* at important towns in Assam which organized varied discussions in its weekly meetings to exchange views amongst them.²⁹ Reference could be made to the essay of Hemchandra Goswami (1872-1928) - one of the originator of *Asomiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha* and a great literary personality of succeeding stage where Bengali *amlahs* (beaurocrates) were held responsible openly for the expulsion of the Assamese language in the province.³⁰ However, it must be noted here that such interpretation was absolutely new which was evidently absent in the writings of Anadaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram Baruah and Hemchandra Baruah who accepted the safe and simplistic interpretation without taking on the difficulty of dissecting the language policy of the colonial authority.³¹ Moreover, the publication of the vernacular monthly *Jonaki* in the year 1889 as the unofficial mouthpiece of the *Sabha* brought about a revolutionary change in style, content and approach to literature through lyrics, short-stories, literary ballads, satirical poems, sketches, novels and plays written on the models of English

²⁸ D. Neog, 1962, *New Light on the History of Asomiya Literature*, *op.cit.*, p. 319.

²⁹ H.K. Barpujari, (Ed.), 2007, *The Comprehensive History of Assam Modern Period: Yandabo To Diarchy 1826-1919*, Vol.V, *op.cit.*, p.220.

³⁰ Prasenjit Choudhury, 1994, *Socio-Cultural Aspect of Assam in the Nineteenth Century*, New Delhi: Vikash Publishing House, p. 48.

³¹ Prasenjit Choudhury, 1994, *Socio-Cultural Aspect of Assam in the Nineteenth Century*, *ibid.*, p. 48.

literary forms. Such writings of Assamese educated youth residing in Calcutta were published in *Jonaki* and its contemporary *Bijuli* which were both being sponsored by the members of the *Sabha*. It must be noted here that Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Chandrakumar Agarwala and Hem Chandra Goswami these three young educated Assamese were regarded as the leading members of the *Sabha* designated as *Trimurti* (Trinity) of literary renaissance of Assamese literature who were inspired by the Bengali renaissance and English romantic literature. However, it was found that youth like Ramakanta Choudhury (1846-89) and Bholanath Das (1858-1919) successfully introduced blank verse in *Kavyas* while experimenting with subjective lyrics and plays based on the Shakespearean model even before *Jonaki* age. Youth activism through renaissance in Assamese literature was evident through the writings of Chadrakumar Agarwala in his two collections *Pratima* (1913) and *Bin Baragi* (1923) where he expressed his love of nature and quest after beauty also dreamt of a clean society free from oppression and exploitation. Reference could also be made to Kamalakanta Bhattacharya (1853-1936) who articulated his deep feelings of patriotism and laments at the degradation of his countrymen in the poems of *Chintanal* (1890, 1892). Poets including Ambikagiri Raychoudhury, Prasannalal Choudhury, Binanda Chandra Baruah and Dimbeswar Neog spoke a pouring current of patriotic and revolutionary urge particularly after the political movement followed by the partition of Bengal in 1905 and the emergence of the Indian National Congress as a strong political force. At the same time, high sense of patriotism and nationalism was also reflected through Ambikagiri's *Bandini Bharot* and *Satadhara* which were prohibited by the British Government. Moreover, Nalini Devi's highly patriotic poems praising the national movement and

exalting India's glorious past, poems of Chandradhar Barua (1874-1961) and Dandinath Kalita (1891-1950) exposing the social evils and religious insincerity in a lighter vein, indolent habits of Assamese and their addiction to opium, snobbery and superstitious beliefs, Hiteswar Barbarua's poetic treatment of a few glorious episodes of the mediaeval Assamese history to the form of epic narratives, the prose literature of *Jonaki* age by Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Lambodor Borah, Kamalakanta Bhattacharya (1853-1936), Saratchandra Goswami (1887-1945), Nakul Chandra Bhuyan (1895-1968), P. N. Gohain Barua, Rajanikanta Bordoloi whose writings mainly concentrated on social evils, dramas of Gohain Barua depicting the corrupt practices of the subordinate officials of the government in the closing years of nineteenth century also contributed to the growth of activism amongst the youth and students through renaissance in Assamese literature during that particular period.

However, the growth of national consciousness through the formation of various organizations and associations amongst the people of Assam also influenced youth activism to a significant level particularly during the period of national movement. The emergence of the several political organizations including Upper Assam Association, Shillong Association, *Nagaon Ryot Sabha* and *Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha* were also regarded as the landmark in the history of political associations in Assam.³² Amongst all these the *Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha* had a definite impact on the education policy of the government which eventually influenced the students of the state. The *Sarbajanik Sabha* criticized the government's decision of the abolition of the second-grade-college in *Guwahati* which was considered by *Sarbajanik Sabha* as highly injudicious. Moreover,

³² H.K. Barpujari, (Ed.), 2007, *The Comprehensive History of Assam Modern Period: Yandabo To Diarchy 1826-1919*, Vol. V, *op.cit.*, p.239.

the *Sarbajanik Sabha* viewed the decision of the reduction in the number of scholarship as disadvantageous to the cause of higher education in Assam. At the same time, the *Sarbajanik Sabha* demanded employment of the natives of the soil in a larger scale and also accentuated the need for the improvement of their pay and prospects. However, with the death of Jagannath Baruah in April 1907, the founder of the *Sarbajanik Sabha* terminated the activities of it which led the Assam Association, the first broad-based political organization representing the wishes and aspirations of the people to act as the mouth piece of the people of Assam.³³ With the materialization of renaissance amongst the Assamese educated youth particularly in the field of language and education led to the establishment of Cotton College-the first college of Assam in the year 1901 which was named after sir Henry Cotton-then chief commissioner of Assam. At the same time, Berry White Medical School was also instituted at *Dibrugarh*. Reference could also be made to Earl Law College which was established with the effort of Manik Chandra Baruah in 1912 in *Guwahati*. Moreover, with the advancement of western education and communication system in the state, the educated youth of Assam led by Manik Chandra Baruah, Ghanashyam Baruah, Faiznur Ali and Jagannath Baruah were found establishing the *Assam Association* in the year 1903. The Assam Association was regarded as the first political organization of the province which acted as the platform for establishing the aims and aspirations of the common people. The association helped in generating modern political consciousness amongst the people of the region particularly the youth. The main aim of the association was to establish the demands of the people of the state before the government according to the rules of the government. The association was established on

³³ H.K. Barpujari, (Ed.), 2007, *The Comprehensive History of Assam Modern Period: Yandabo To Diarchy 1826-1919*, Vol. V, *op.cit.*, pp.239-242.

the basis of non-communal nationalist ideals. Reference could be made to the annual session of the Assam Association held at *Dibrugarh* in the year 1917 presided over by Nabin Chandra Bordoloi which was remarkable in building new consciousness amongst the people of the state where for the first time in the history of the association demands were made in favour of extremist group to take the leadership of the association by replacing the moderate group. In this particular session of the association demands were also made for the achievement of autonomous rule of India and supports were being made in favour of organizing movement for establishing autonomous rule. It showed that the association worked as a purely political organization of the state while supporting the demands of the liberation of the country. Moreover, one group of youth from the association representing the state went to meet Montague who came from England in 1917 to deal with the proposal of giving autonomous rule to the country during the tenure of Lord Chamesford. People like Honourable Padma Nath Gohain Baruah, Honourable Ghanashyam Baruah, Honourable Tarun Ram Phukan, Ray Bahadur Ganga Govinda Phukan, Chandradhar Baruah, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and Prasanna Kumar Baruah consisted of the representative group who demanded the equal political opportunities for the province along with the rest of the country. However, later came to know that arrangement was made by the British Government to isolate the province from the revised and amended ruling system in the year 1918. In the annual session of the Assam Association held at *Goalpara* in 1918, President Tarun Ram Phukan demanded the establishment of a democratic government replacing the bureaucratic government in the country. In this session Nabin Chandra Bordoloi became the general secretary by replacing Ghanashyam Baruah which led to the growth of extremism in the Association.

The apparent illustration of activism amongst the youth of the association was reflected in visiting parliamentary committee in England by a delegation led by Nabin Chandra Bordoloi as the representative of the association in 1918 to demand for the inclusion of the province under the revised ruling system of the country. It was Bordoloi's coherent thoughts and defensible talk which helped in accomplishing the demand and Assam became a part of the amended ruling system of the country. Moreover, Assam Association's remarkable contribution towards the successful campaigning of the Non-Cooperation Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 also facilitated the growth of huge mass appealing and public opinion in the province. With the decision of the association the state rejected Council along with the country. Reference could be made to Kumud Ram Bora who denied the membership of Assam Legislative Council and Hari Prasad Das, who left the post of Sub-Deputy Collector who also encouraged the people of the state to participate in to the movement. He also requested the student leaders of the *Asom Chatra Sanmilian*, one of the oldest student organizations of the country which was established in 1916 to avoid the classes of the colleges during the period of the movement. At the same time, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Tarun Ram Phukan, Bishnuram Medhi, Gopinath Bordoloi and Rohini Kumar Choudhury also left their jobs and participated in the movement by publishing the fortitude of the movement. It must be noted here that till the year March, 1921, there was no separate organization namely Congress in the state apart from the Assam Association. Therefore, the association acted as the umbrella organization which became able to garner enormous public opinion concerning the various tribulations of the province.³⁴ At the same time, the establishment

³⁴ Indrani Baruah, 1989, *Bharot Barsor Swadhinota Andolan Aru Asom*, Guwahati: Purbanchal Prakash, pp. 151-57.

of *Assam Sahitya Sabha* (the Literary Organization of Assam) in 1917 providing the common forum to the literatures of the province for exchange of views for the growth and development of Assamese language and literature added significantly to the intensification of national consciousness amongst the youth of the province thereby contributing to the emergence of activism through association building.³⁵ Accordingly, the role of youth through these associations revealed that these were instrumental in the growth of activism amongst youth which was association building of its kind.

Reference could also be made to the progressive Assamese young businessmen who started developing as the most significant social group in the state during the early period of the twentieth century. Manik Chandra Baruah and his close relative Bholanath Baruah became an independent millionaire timber merchant of the state. The later who first started his business career under the former became timber merchant of *Orissa* with his head-office in *Calcutta* afterwards. Dinanath Bezbaruah, the small tea-businessman and his son Lakshminath Bezbaruah established timber business outside Assam. Where in one hand, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's one son became a business partner of Manik Chandra Baruah on the other hand, Hemdhar Baruah his son Jagannath Baruah and Haribilas Agarwala established tea-gardens of their own. At the same time, Anandaram Baruah was also found starting his own tea garden business after his retirement from Indian Civil Service. Reference could be made to Gunabhiram Baruah who also started business of his own. However, it was found that this group of new intelligentsia was very much influenced by western ideas which led businessmen like Manik Chandra Baruah, Hemchandra Baruah and Radhanath Changkakoti to invest money in printing presses and

³⁵ H.K. Barpujari, (Ed.), 2007, *The Comprehensive History of Assam Modern Period: Yandabo To Diarchy 1826-1919*, Vol. V, *op.cit.*, pp. 220-22.

newspapers. However, British interference and collaboration of *Marwari* (ethnic group originate from Rajasthan) capitals affected this rising group of Assamese young businessmen who grew critical of the British Government in the course of time.³⁶ However, youth activism was viewed growing remarkably amongst this new group of intelligentsia of the province during that particular period of history. It was seen that youth activism was prominent in minimizing the long inadequacy of having educational institutions in the state. Although Cotton College was established in the very beginning of the twentieth century but it could not accomplish the limits of educational institutions which demanded for establishing some more institutions in the province. While in one hand, people like Phanidhar Chaliha, Benudhar Rajkhuwa, Debeswar Chaliha etc. supported the demand for establishing educational institutions in the state but on the other hand, some others opposed it and demanded for instituting hostels for students in *Calcutta*.³⁷ Manik Chandra Baruah and the other prominent people consisting of middle classes in Assam were in favour of establishing hostels in *Calcutta* rather than having their own educational institutions in the province. It was understood that the middle classes in the state could not take a definite stand against the decisions of the colonial government. However, under the weak stand of the Assamese middle classes, the state obtained a college in 1901. It was seen that the number of the educational institutions in Assam was increased from 2,800 to 3, 534 and the number of the students from 83,638 to 10, 3541. Moreover, Assam's first non-governmental college namely *Jagannath Baruah College* was established in the year 10 October, 1930 under the strong opposition of the British Government. At the same time, *Murarichand College*, another non-governmental

³⁶ S.L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam, op.cit.*, pp. 512-13.

³⁷ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947), op.cit.*, pp. 20-1.

college at *Srihatta Habiganj* was also established. Under the impact of the changes in the international political scenario with the victory of *Japan* over *Russia* in the year 1904, the Indian National Movement also underwent certain changes in its nature. The Indian National Congress also was found changing its liberal attitude towards British imperialism. Protest over anti-partition issue of 1905 also influenced the province where people including Jagannath Baruah and Manik Chandra Baruah requested the administration to safeguard the interests of the people of the state. However, the British government ensured the provisions for educational scholarship to the students of Assam and giving preferences to the Assamese students in getting jobs in the government services. During the period of the anti-partition movement in 1905, the *Swadeshi Movement* took a political turn with the issues of boycotting foreign goods, schools and colleges administered by the Britishers and adoption of the *swadeshi* goods and attending educational institutions of their own by the natives. Along with the students of the rest of the country, the Assamese students also participated in the movement thereby publicizing the *swadeshi* goods at the places of *Tezpur* and *Barpeta*. With the request of Bipin Chandra Pal, a number of forty students boycotted schools in Assam. Accordingly, several public schools were found establishing in different parts in the state and they became the major source of publicizing issues of the national movement.³⁸ According to a government source, it was stated that:

³⁸ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 22-5.

“Students and Children formed the bulk of the audience at anti-partition meetings and were organized into noisy processions that paraded the streets of moffusil towns shouting *Bande Mataram* and interfering with trade.”³⁹

Accordingly, it was viewed that agitational activism amongst the students acted as a significant factor during the *Swadeshi* Movement in the state. In effect, it was found that the movement against partition of Bengal in 1905 influenced the youth of the province along with rest of the country which also contributed towards the emergence of activism amongst them. However, it was found that the level of student activism was thus high which forced the colonial government to prohibit the students’ participation into the movement and also over teachers of the educational institutions. At the same time, 300 students were also imposed sanctions to enter into the educational institutions for participating in the movement.⁴⁰ Student’s significant contribution to the national movement in the state during that period was reflected from Ambikagiri’s statement:

The students participated in the *Swadeshi* Movement through publicizing the *swadeshi* principle amongst the people, selling of home-produced cotton clothes and also encouraging women to produce clothes at home by using home-made machines.⁴¹

It could be viewed that students took an unbending stand against the British Government in the *Swadeshi* movement. Reference could be made to “*Sewa Sangha*” (Service Organization) of students under the leadership of Nidhiram Das during that period of the movement which also contributed significantly to the national movement. The member students were Nidhiram Das, Bishnuram Medhi, Triguna Baruah, Peetamber

³⁹ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 23-5.

⁴⁰ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴¹ Ambikagiri Raychoudhury, 1973, *Mur Jibon Dhumuhar Esati*, Gauhati: Kaushalya Devi Raychoudhury, p. 18-9.

Chakrabarthy, Balek Lahakar, Kumud Bora, Binanda Baruah, Raktim Bora, Pushpo Ujir, Ganesh Dasgupta, Dhireswar Bhattacharyya and Ambikagiri Raychoudhury. At the same time, Ambikagiri's revolutionary play *Bandini Bharot* was staged in *Guwahati* which also created reaction amongst the people during the period of the *Swadeshi* Movement. However, police was found reserving some portion of the play afterwards. At the same time, extremist elements were also found growing amongst the students of the state under the leadership of Ambikagiri under the influence of the rising extremism in *Bengal*.⁴² Although, extremism was prevalent amongst the students of the state particularly during the period of the anti-partition movement however, it was found that without having a particular political ideology it was not possible to have a positive result of such extremist movements. However, the division of the Indian National Congress (INC) into moderates and extremists also affected the views of the Congress leaders on the student's participation in the movement.⁴³ Reference could be made to Gopal Krishna Gokhle who commented on student's participation in the movement:

“The active participation of students in political agitation really tends to lower the dignity and the responsible character of public life and impairs its true effectiveness.”⁴⁴

Accordingly, the student's participation in the movement was not welcomed at different levels by the leaders of the Congress also. However, Dada Bhai Nouraji, the President of *Calcutta* Congress in the year 1906 regretted about the fact that students

⁴² Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, op.cit., pp. 26-7.

⁴³ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, ibid., pp. 28-9.

⁴⁴ Ram Gopal, 1967, *How India Struggled for Freedom*, Bombay: The Book Centre, p. 169.

were kept aside from taking education about politics in the educational institutes.⁴⁵ While the leadership of Congress was in one hand skeptical about student's participation in the movement but at the same time, some leaders also encouraged student's political knowledge particularly during the period of the movement. Accordingly, it was seen that during the period of the anti-partition movement the students of Assam attained involvement into the political ideology of the national movement through which they served for the liberation of the country from the colonial rulers. This also reflected the firm political stand of the students towards the British Government in comparison to their earlier counterparts. It was viewed that this effort on the part of the students also invited greater popular support to the national movement in the province.⁴⁶ Analysis revealed that the agitational activism amongst the students of the state was prominent during the particular historical period.

However, the formation of the states' first student organization namely *Asom Chatra Sanmilian* by the joint effort of *Calcutta Assamese Students' Literary Club* (ASL Club), *Cotton College Assamese Students' Club* and *Guwahati Ekota Sabha* in the year 1916 paved the path for the emergence of activism at different levels amongst the students of the state. The *Chatra Sanmilian* received enormous popular support particularly from the students of Assam. The first five conferences of the *Chatra Sanmilian* held at places like *Guwahati, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Tezpur* and *Golaghat* which were presided over by eminent literary persons of the state including Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Gordon, Gohain Baruah, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray and Bhandarkar.

⁴⁵ See for Nouraji's view on education about politics in the educational institutions, Mrinal Kumar Basu, "Regional Patriotism: A Study in Bihar Politics (1907-1912)", *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2, January, 1977, p. 288.

⁴⁶ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp.28-9.

However, the *Chatra Sanmilian* suffered its first setback with the arrest of its leaders due to the co-operation of the students of Assam in the Non-Cooperation Movement against the British Government. However, the *Chatra Sanmilian* again achieved its prompt character in its 1921 Conference held in *Guwahati Harisabha Mandap* under the presidentship of philosopher Ray Ronald Tomas of Cotton College and also with the endeavor of Daibochandra Talukdar and other student leaders of the *Chatra Sanmilian*. The presidential address of the seventh conference of the *Chatra Sanmilian* held under the presidentship of Hemchandra Goswami in 1922, the eighth conference under the presidentship of Dinabandhu Andrus and the ninth Conference of the *Chatra Sanmilian* under the presidentship of Nabinchandra Bordoloi which were published in *Milan*, the mouthpiece of the *Chatra Sanmilian* contributed significantly in the literary field also. Several occasions like *Lachit* festival, *Chilaray* festival etc. were organized by the *Chatra Sanmilian* which also helped in the growth of regional consciousness of the youth of the state.⁴⁷ It must be stated here that articles, poems, songs, acts in vernacular language were performed by the students of Assam in the conferences of the *Chatra Sanmilian*. Reference could be made to twelveth Conference of the *Chatra Sanmilian* held in *Guwahati* under the presidentship of Salauddin Khudabox Sahaab of *Calcutta* where the articles namely *Asomor Bhougolik Bibaran* by Sarbeswar Sharma Kakoti and *Mati Aru Rasayan* by Dimbeswar Neog were read out. Moreover, poem by Atul Chandra Hazarika, song by Parboti Prasad Baruah and act by Lakhyadhar Choudhury were also carried out in the conference. At the same time, eight proposals were also adopted by the conference

⁴⁷ See for a discussion on *Chatra Sanmilian*'s initiative for organizing *Bir Puja* (Worship to Heroes of the state), Atul Chandra Hazarika, (Ed.), 1960, *Bhasan Mala: Collection of Addresses to Assam Chatra Sanmilian*, *op.cit.*, p.300. Also see Prafulla Goswami, "Asom Chatra Sanmilian, Chatra Andolan and Amar Bortoman Kartavya", *Milan*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1939, p. 16.

which included criticism of *Miss Mayo* for writing Mother India which spread the obscurity the country and praise for Cotton College establisher Sudmerson Sahab. Moreover, demand was also made for maintaining Assamese as the language of the Cotton College magazine instead of English. At the same time, that the 13th Conference of *Chatra Sanmilian* under the presidentship of Tarun Ram Phukan was significant in various aspects where Bezbarua's *Mur Desh* song was recognized as the national anthem of the state. It must be stated here that with the effort of Assamese youth like Indreswar Borthakur, Prafulla Chandra Baruah, Bishnu Rabha, Kumud Sharma, Kamala Prasad Agarwala, Funu Baruah, Ratneswar Bordoloi etc., the Assamese music was relieved from inadequacy. Moreover, the songs of Rupkuwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala also contributed immensely in this regard. In that particular conference of *Chatra Sanmilian*, a proposal was also made for the establishment of a University in *Guwahati* by Atul Chandra Hazarika which received enormous support from the *Chatra Sanmilian* members. The successful conferences of the *Chatra Sanmilian* which expected huge mass support and co-operation were held at *Tezpur* where Acharyya Prafulla Chandra Ray presided over the conference. The conference held under the presidentship of Tarun Ram Phukan for the second time also gained tremendous popular support. However, the publication of the tribute to the collection of Hem Chandra Baruah namely *Hem Chandra Baruah Sowarani Granthawali* was one of the major contributions of the *Chatra Sanmilian*. It was also seen that the *Milan*, the mouth piece was also instrumental in the emergence of activism amongst the students of Assam.⁴⁸ It acted as the intermediary between the common people and the student group during that particular period which also strengthened

⁴⁸ See for a discussion on *Milan*, the mouth piece of *Chatra Sanmilian* and its role in enhancing student activism in various fields, Atul Chandra Hazarika, 1981, *Smritilekha*, Guwahati: Asom Prakashan Parishad, pp.194-98.

peoples' participation in politics. It must be noted here that the mouth piece of the student organization became able to minimize the division amongst the students of the state during that period. Moreover, the magazine became able to attract the attention of the noted literary persons of the state during that particular period. It was found that the main endeavor of this magazine was to serve the country for its just cause amid grave financial crisis. It survived mainly on the significant student labour of that period.⁴⁹ Accordingly, it became instrumental in organizing student power of the state thereby building associational activism amongst them. Student activism through *Chatra Sanmilan* was found contributing significantly to the enhancement of nationalism amongst the common people of the state. This could also be regarded as the phase of youth activism emphasizing on interest articulation through associational activism.

It might be stated here that the *Chatra Sanmilan* was initially formed for the growth and development of language and culture of the state and was not related to the national movement of the country. The *Sanmilan* did not talk about any issues related to politics. However, it is important to understand the difference between political and non-political participation of student unions which signifies their relations with the political parties of particular period. The existing writings on student union in Assam have claimed that these organizations are non-political. But politics as interplay of power is a universal activity in all societies irrespective of level and times. It exists not only in the state, groups, institutions, political parties and trade unions but also can be found in the family, clubs, schools, colleges, religious organizations, cultural bodies, civic organizations, multi-national companies and the workplace. It is not only unique to the

⁴⁹ Atul Chandra Hazarika, 1981, *Smritilekha*, *op.cit.*, pp. 198-200.

public sphere but also exists in the private domain.⁵⁰ We try to see if the nature of student association can be understood in terms of these forms and practices of politics. Our definition of politics does not remain restricted to the realm of party politics but it extends to these all forms and practices because in our times politics goes beyond formal governance and has become a way of life. Hence, our discussion on *Chatra Sanmilan* revealed that the organization was highly political in nature although it did not have immediate connection with the national movement of the country. The existing literatures have neglected this aspect while trying to understand the nature of student unions in Assam. It may be stated here that in the history of student associations in Assam, we find various student wings of different political parties whose existence is evident during the period of India's freedom struggle. However, the change in the nature of the *Chatra Sanmilan* was evident since the year 1920. It was stated that:

“Chadra Nath, the key organizer of the Chatra Sanmilan was found to be highly influenced by the Swadeshi Andolan and the ideologies of Congress. Congress leaders including Dadabhai Nouroji, Gopalkridshna Gokhele, Bal Gangadhar Tilak etc. also inspired Chandra Nath.”⁵¹

The leadership of the *Chatra Sanmilan* was inspired by the national movement and its ideology which also contributed towards the growth of political aspirations amongst the students of Assam. This also helped in developing agitational activism amongst them. For example, the adoption of the proposal in the *Tezpur* conference in the year 1919 to use *Swadeshi* goods by the *Chatra Sanmilan* was also indicative of the fact that the students were highly inspired by the ideology of the Indian National Congress. It

⁵⁰ Sushila Ramaswami, 2005, *Political Theory*, New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd., pp.224-267.

⁵¹ Dandi Nath Kalita, 1946, *Karmabir Chandra Nath*, p.91 as cited in Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, op.cit., p. 262.

must be noted here that such initiatives were never taken earlier by any other organization of the state. It was also stated that certain fundamental changes in the nature of the *Chatra Sanmilian* were noticed from the year 1920. One representative group of the members of the *Chatra Sanmilian* including Chandra Nath Sharma, Umesh Chandra Das, Bidya Dhar Sharma, Diba Ram Talukdar etc. went to join the *Nagpur* session of the Nikhil Bharat Students' Federation, a student organization at national level. At the same time, the conference of INC was also held at *Nagpur* during that same period. The Nikhil Bharat Students' Federation supported the non-cooperation decision of the INC.⁵² Prafulla Chandra Baruah and Lakhi Dhar Sharma were found attending the *Nagpur* session of the INC as the representatives of newspaper.⁵³ These were those students who attended the sessions of INC and Nikhil Bharat Students' Federation held at *Nagpur* who participated in the non-cooperation movement through boycotting their colleges. The boycotting of colleges in *Calcutta* also influenced the students of Assam who also started refusing to attend the classes of schools and colleges. At the same time, several meetings of students also took place during that period. Analysis revealed that Assam's student agitational activism was a prominent feature of the national movement during its every phase. Student power in Assam was found joining the Non-Cooperation Movement while opposing the decision of the Assam Association and the middle classes of the state. At the same time, Congress was also formed under the initiative of the students of Assam. Accordingly, it was viewed that the organization of the regional Congress and the Non-Cooperation Movement in Assam was dealt with by the student power of the state.⁵⁴

⁵² Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, *op.cit.*, pp. 262-64.

⁵³ Prafulla Chandra Baruah, "Swadhinota Sangram", in Harendra Nath Baruah, (et al), (Eds.), 1972, *Bharotor Mukti Jujat Asom*, Guwahati: Assam Freedom Fighter's Association, p.283.

⁵⁴ Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, *loc.cit.*

Ramesh Kalita stated that the Non-Cooperation Movement, the national level movement in Assam was run particularly by the student power of the state or else, it could not have recognized as fact of history.⁵⁵

Accordingly, such participation of students showed their agitational activism in the particular period of history. It was also evident that with the formation of Congress in Assam in place of the Association, the *Chatra Sanmilian* became an adherent organization of Congress.⁵⁶ We found the fundamental changes in the structure of the *Sanmilian* with the decision of boycotting the schools and colleges while opposing to the *Cunningham Circular* in the year 1930. At the same time, Jorhat District Students' Federation was formed and was directly included under the umbrella organization of Nikhil Bharat Students' Federation at national level. However, it was stated that the originators of the regional student organization were ignorant of the fact that the Nikhil Bharat Students' Federation was influenced by the communist ideology. It was seemed that to become a part of the national level organization, the Jorhat District Students' Federation joined the student federation. However, the fundamental changes in the character of the *Chatra Sanmilian* were evident in its' annual conference held at Jorhat in the year 199. In this conference the *Chatra Sanmilian* became a fraction of the Nikhil Bharat Students' Federation and a direct link between national movement and the *Chatra Sanmilian* was established. It was evident that in this historical conference of the student organization, the *Chatra Sanmilian* changed its decree of maintaining itself being separated from the national movement. Accordingly, the elementary changes in the character of the student organization from purely a nonaligned organization to opinionated were apparent in this

⁵⁵ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharator Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp.58-9.

⁵⁶ Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, *op.cit.*, p.267.

conference of the organization in the year 1939.⁵⁷ The role of the *Sanmilan* was instrumental in building agitational activism amongst the students of the province particularly during the period of Non-Cooperation Movement. It was found that meetings were organized at different places of the state by the leaders of the *Sanmilan* to discuss about the issues of the movement including boycotting of schools and colleges and refusing the use of foreign goods. The students of Cotton College went for strike in the last part of January, 1921 as hundreds of students came out of schools and colleges. Lakhidhar Sharma and a number of students studying at *Calcutta* came back to Assam and took up the organizational and propaganda work which also gave a tremendous encouragement to the students of the state to participate in the movement. It was also estimated by the Director of Public Instruction of Assam that about 15,000 students who joined the movement never returned to their classes. The demand for setting up of national institutions for the education of young was made by undertaking such steps of boycotting of schools and colleges during the period of the movement. Accordingly, a number of such institutions also came up in the province. At the same time, in response to Gandhi's call, Chandra Nath Sharma also suspended his legal practice in the *Tezpur* Court and came over to *Gauhati* to organize the student community in the state during the period of the movement. Students' agitational activism geared up during the period of the movement through propagating the message of Non-Cooperation and explaining to the people the evil effects of opium habit.⁵⁸ It was found that in a meeting organized by the striking students of Cotton College at *Palasbari*, on January 26, 1921, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi called upon the government officials to tender their resignations. At the same

⁵⁷ Prafulla Mahanta, 2009, *Asomiya Madhyabritta Shrenir Itihas*, *ibid.*, pp. 268-69.

⁵⁸ S.L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, *op.cit.*, pp. 536-37.

time, during one meeting of Non-Cooperation organized by students held at *Chayagaon*, *Kamrup* district, shop-keepers burnt cigarettes to prohibit the use of the foreign goods. While, in one hand, the tailors were induced at *Gauhati* not to make garments of foreign cloth, on the other hand, in another meeting a number of sweepers, cobblers, washer men, carters and labourers swore to abstain from liquor. Under the spirit of the students leading businessmen of the town also assured the Congressmen the co-operation of their business community in the movement. Assembled people were also found making a bonfire of cigarettes in a meeting organized by the students during the period of the movement.⁵⁹ It was viewed that the students of Cotton College were the predecessor of the growing agitational activism amongst students of the state during the period of the movement. Chandra Nath Sharma also stated that the success of the movement was largely depended on the participation of the students of Cotton College in boycotting their college.⁶⁰ Consequently, the students of Cotton College, the main educational institute of the province became the precursor of the students who in large numbers participated in the movement. They were seen not only boycotting the schools and colleges but also were found publicizing the issues, planes and programmes of the non-cooperation. The boycotting of the classes of the college students also influenced the students of the schools of the state and many school children also found boycotting their classes in schools. They were also seen burning foreign clothes, doing procession with national flag in their hands, building organization of Congress in the villages, collecting money,

⁵⁹ S.L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, *op.cit.*, p. 537.

⁶⁰ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.* p.45. For a discussion of Cotton College students' participation in the Non-Cooperation Movement see, Amalendu Guha, 1988, *Planter Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle And Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, p.124 (Reprint), Lakhi Devi, *Phukonor Dinot Asom: Rajnaitik Paristhiti*, Tarun Smriti: Asom Sahitya Sabha, p.51, Kanak Chandra Baruah, "Asomot Asohojug Andolanor Arombhoni", in Harendra Nath Baruah (et al), (Eds.), 1972, *Bharotor Mukti Jujat Asom*, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

prohibiting *Cuny* (a kind of local narcotic) in different places of the state. Moreover, it was with the cooperation of the students “Stop Revenue” movement was also built in the places of *Mongoldoi* area of *Darrang*, *Baksha* and *Boko* of *Kamrup* during the period of the Non-Cooperation Movement. Many national schools were also founded at different places of the state including *Bharalumukh*, *Palashbari*, *Borpeta*, *Barnagaar*, *Hazara Pukhuri Paar* of *Tezpur*, *Nagaon*, *Raha*, *Patharughat*, *Chatia*, *Jorhat* and one technical school at *Bakata* were also established. Several Volunteers’ Associations were also created with the students of class VII to X at many villages of the state particularly during the period of the movement. These became instrumental in building communal harmony, prohibiting untauchability and using of *swadeshi* clothes to a considerable extent in the state. Although the main objective of non-cooperation was not achieved however, the student force became successful in prohibiting the use of narcotics particularly *Cunny* in the state.⁶¹ Accordingly, it was seen that the student power remained the main force behind the Non-Cooperation Movement in which the agitational activism of students was prominent.

Youth agitational activism particularly amongst the students was high up again during the period of the Civil Disobedient Movement of 1930-32 against the *Simon Commission* which came to the country to enquire about the working of the *Montford reforms* without having Indian representation in the province along with the rest of the country.⁶² Where in the Lahore session of the INC in the year 1929, it declared complete independence as its goal, the decision also provoked the people of the province to take

⁶¹ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 50-8.

⁶² For a discussion on the role of youth in civil disobedience movement in Assam, see Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *ibid.*, pp.62-96.

steps to launch a programme of Civil Disobedience. Although, there were differentiation of opinion regarding Assam's joining in the movement, however, after Gandhi's famous march to *Dandi* beginning on March 12, 1930 and the arrest of the national leaders like Gandhi and Nehru, people of the province were found growing restless for more radical programmes to enhance the movement. It was seen that in the *Surma* Valley, there was massive response to the civil disobedience call. Several cases of violation of salt law regulations and march to *Noakhali* were found to make salt in the indigenous way out of the saline water of the Bay of Bengal during the period of the movement. Students in the *Surma* Valley also participated in a large number in the movement. Some students led by Darikanath Goswami, a student of the Murari Chand College of *Sylhet* formed *Socialist Youth Conference* and actively participated in the movement. Student activism in the movement was so high in both the valleys which compelled the British Government to instruct the Principals of M.C. College and Cotton College to alert the students not to participate in the movement. The students were also being notified that their active participation in political agitations in future would disqualify them for any government appointment. However, such warning on the part of the British Government could not horrify the students and the students of the M.C. College observed a *hartal* on April 15 to mark a protest against the arrest of Nehru. They also boycotted the college for which 26 students of the College were expelled. The students were found protesting again such actions which led them to call for an indefinite general strike from April 16.⁶³ The school students were also found observing *hartal* on the same day.⁶⁴ The increasing participation of students in the movement apprehended the movement to a large extent and

⁶³ S.L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam, op.cit.*, pp. 546-48.

⁶⁴ S.L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam, ibid.*, pp.548.

accordingly, J.A. Cunningham, then Director of Public Instruction of Assam, promulgated a circular to all academic heads of the province in order to deter them from participating in the movement. Under this circular, the students and the guardians had to give a written undertaking that the students would refrain from participation in any kind of political activities and would abide by the disciplinary rules and orders of the institution heads and the education department. However, the circular received sharp reaction throughout the province not only amongst the students who participated actively in the movement but also amongst the nationalists who started several national schools at different places of the state including *Gauhati, Tezpur, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Silchar, Maulavi Bazar* and *Habiganj* on public charity without government assistance. With the increasing participation of the student folk and with numerous arrests and imprisonments of the participants of the movement, the movement gained greater momentum day by day. At the same time, in one case, the students were also found suffering indiscriminate *lathi* charge by the police which led to the severe injury of twenty of them.⁶⁵ Although, the dissatisfaction of the youth with the non-violent movement of Gandhi, led them to be engrossed by revolutionary terrorism in some cases in one hand and socialism on the other during the period of the movement in different places of the country including West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Moreover, the death of Jatindra Nath Das who was kept in the jail for opposing the Trade Dispute Bill which aimed at curbing the right of the Indian Labour Movement triggered the student power of the province again.⁶⁶ In the annual conference of the *Chatra Sanmilian* held in the year 1928, Tarun Ram Phukan, the

⁶⁵ S.L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam, op.cit.*, pp. 548-49.

⁶⁶ For a discussion on the activism of the Assamese students studying at *Kashi* and *Calcutta* University during Civil Disobedience Movement Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharator Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947), op.cit.*, pp. 66-9.

president of the conference encouraged youth to participate in the national movement. Moreover, in the annual conference of the *Sanmilan* in the year 1929, President Krishna Kanta Handique also supported the participation of the students in the national movement against the British Government. Accordingly, these speeches of the both presidents of the *Sanmilan* were instrumental in the growth and development of agitational activism amongst the youths of Assam. During the period 1922 to 1929, a number of Assamese students joined the annual conferences of INC. At the *Pandu* Session of Congress held in 1926, some students of Cotton College led by Harendra Nath Baruah worked as volunteers without the consent of the college authority. Lakhidhar Bora of Gauhati Arle Law College also served as a volunteer of the Congress session at *Pandu*. At the same time, several students of Cotton College went to participate in the Lahore session of Congress in 1929 along with the leaders including Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, Pabitra Nath Sharma etc. In an another conference of Congress, two school students of Assam namely Devokanta Baruah and Ashwini Kanta Borkakoti also participated where decision was taken about Assam's participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Moreover, Assamese student Liladhar Baruah participated in the famous *Dandi Jatra* (*Dandi* march) of Gandhi. Along with the formation of several youth organizations in the rest of the country, *Sodou Asom Yuvak Sangha* (All Assam Youth Organization) was also established in the year 1929 in Assam at *Golaghat* in the 14th annual conference of *Chatra Sanmilan* under the initiative of Shankar Baruah. Where Tarun Ram Phukan was selected as the President and Shankar Baruah, Devendra Nath Sharma and Radhika Ram Das became the joint secretary of the organization, a number of Cotton College students including Bijay Chandra Bhagawati, Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, Girindra Chandra

Choudhury, Devendra Nath Choudhury etc. became members of it. This organization took active steps in the national movement of 1930. Several meetings of the organization were held in *Guwahati* with the presence of the students of Cotton College and many meetings were also organized in the villages of the state to make people aware of the movement. At the same time *Puthimari Kendriya Chatra Sanmilan* (*Puthimari National Students' Union*) was also formed by Sarat Chandra Goswami, a student of Philosophy of Calcutta University in 1929. Reference could also be made to the formation of Tarun Sangha (Tarun Union) in the different places of the state including *Goalpara, Abhayapuri* etc. in the years 1924 to 1928 which aimed at undertaking armed tactics against the British Government. Similar to Non-Cooperation Movement, during Civil Disobedience Movement also students of Assam were found adopting different steps to mark the protest against the Britishers including boycotting of schools, colleges, hoisting national flags, building processions to publicize the issues and principles of civil disobedience etc. at different places of the state. However, with the division of opinions amid the leaders of Assam Congress regarding the decision of participating in the movement weakened the organizational level in the state during the period of the movement.⁶⁷ In such a critical situation of the organizational level in Assam Congress during the period of the movement, the students played important role in re-constituting the organization in the province. Amiyo Kumar Das stated:

⁶⁷ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 74-80. See for a discussion on Congress organization in Assam during Civil Disobedience Movement, K.N. Dutta, 1998, *Landmarks in the Freedom Struggle of Assam*, Guwahati: Lawyers' Books Stall, p. 72, (Reprint). Also see H.K. Barpujari, S.K. Barpujari and A.C. Bhuyan, (Eds.), 1978, *Political History of Assam: 1920-1939*, Vol. II, Gauhati: Department for the Preparation of Political History of Assam, Government of Assam, p. 144.

“A number of members of Asom Chatra Sanmilan joined the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. Without the strength of the students the Assam Congress would not have able to organize the movement vigorously in the state.”⁶⁸

At the same time, during the period of Gandhi's *Dandi March* also, a volunteers group of *Abhayapuri* started a procession where several school students also participated. After the arrest of Gandhi and Nehru also students boycotted schools and colleges and participated in the movement in a large scale in different places of the state like *North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Sivasagarh, Najira, Jorhat, Nagaon, Tezpur, Guwahati, Nalbari, Palasbari* and *Dhuburi*. Reference could be made to one Assamese student Bishnu Prasad Rabha who made a symbolic protest against the imperialists and the Indian capitalist class in the place *Kochbihaar*. Different student organizations like *Golaghat Students' Union, Golaghat Union Library* etc. also encouraged agitational activism amongst the students of the state. The *Cunningham Circular* and the British Government's decision of imposing it on the students of the province led the students to take it as a matter of self-respect which made them to participate in the movement numerously resulting into the boycotting of government schools and also picketing in front of the government offices.⁶⁹ Agitational activism amongst the students of Assam touched its highest point with the formation of different student unions in different places of the state during the period of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Reference could be made to *Chatra Sangha* (Student Union) of *Barpeta* which also inspired the students to

⁶⁸ H.K. Barpujari S.K. Barpujari and A.C. Bhuyan, (Eds.), 1978, *Political History of Assam: 1920-1939*, Vol. II, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

⁶⁹ See for a discussion on Cunningham Circular and students' participation in Civil Disobedience Movement Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 81-8. Also see, Amalendu Guha, 1988, *Planter Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle And Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, *op.cit.*, pp.73-4.

serve for the country to large extent. Protests were also seen in different places of *Nalbari, Mangaldoi, Goalpara, Chinamara, Nagaon, Hailakandi* etc. against the imposition of the Circular.⁷⁰ It showed that youth agitational and association building activism were prominent during the particular period of history in the state which made the movement to term as the student movement as the students were the main participants and at many times the organizer of the movement.⁷¹

However, student activism became much prominent in Quite India Movement of 1942 in comparison to the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movement. As mentioned earlier in chapter I, Altbach termed the period of the Quit India Movement as the peak of student activism in the country as a whole.⁷² It must be stated here that the association building activism of students led them developing agitational activism throughout various phases of the national movement thereby articulating interest and building public opinion. It was to be mentioned here that the *Asom Chatra Sanmilian* was the only regional student union of the state till the year 1939. The *Surma Valley Students' Federation* was formed in 1926 which became the student union of *Srihatta* and *Cachar* district. This student union was influenced by All Bengal Students' Association and Bengal Provincial Students' Association of West Bengal. In the year 1939, under the initiatives of Biswanath Mukherjee, the joint secretary of All India Students' Federation (AISF) which came into existence in 1936, and the student leaders of Assam including Dadhi Mahanta, Kirti Bordoloi, Sidananda Saikia, Dhireswar Kalita, Bhadra Krishna Goswami, Ramesh Sharma, Nandeswar Talukdar, Madan Borpujari, Prafulla Goswami,

⁷⁰ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 90-1.

⁷¹ K.N. Dutta, 1998, *Landmarks in the Freedom Struggle of Assam*, *op.cit.*, pp. 74-5.

⁷² Philip G. Altbach, (Ed.), 1968, *Turmoil And Transition*. New York: Basic Books INC Publishers, pp.25-35.

Jadu Saikia, Binay Chakravarty, Nilomoni Borthakur, Dhiren Dutta, Pabitra Roy and Bishnu Bora etc., the *Chatra Sanmilan* was included under All India Students' Federation in its' annual session held at *Jorhat* under the presidentship of communist leader Mansur Habib. It was under the communist leadership of the student union, the annual session of Great October Revolution was organized in 7th November of 1939 in the state. A joint Conference of Assam Student Federation and *Surma* Valley Students' Federation was held at *Silchar* in the last month of 1939 where 600 representatives joined. In this Conference, the two organizations decided to work together and claimed the resignation of then Gopinath Bordoloi ministry in power for shelling at the oil labours who was picketing at *Digboi*. At the same time, Prafulla Goswami and Bishnu Bora were found addressing 10,000 people at a large gathering of masses at *Digboi* where they criticized the Bordoloi ministry for safeguarding British capital. Accordingly, the growth of communist feelings amongst the students of Assam was viewed and they are found also with political sovereignty demanding economic freedom under the influence of Marxist philosophy. At the same time, the students of Cotton College were also found building connection with Bengal Peasants and Workers' Party.⁷³ Thus, socialist and revolutionary ideals influenced student activism to a considerable extent during the period of the national movement in Assam. Reference could be made to an Assamese student namely Jagannath Baruah, a student of *Kashi University of Benaras* got associated with the local Socialist Party. Through this he participated in the socialist movement with the co-operation of the socialist workers. At the same time, the formation of Progressive Union in *Guwahati* also contributed to the growth and development of socialist ideals amongst

⁷³ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp.104-14.

the youth of the state. However, Nehru's speech in Cotton College in a student meeting in 1937 proved instrumental in building agitational activism amongst the students and at the same time, it also encouraged them politically. Several development including the election of Dadhi Mahanta in 1936 and Bishnu Bora in 1937 as the general secretary of J. B. College of *Jorhat*, the influence of Assamese students studying in *Kashi* University like Jadunath Saikia and above all the amendment of the constitution of Cotton College Students' Union helped in building communism amongst students thereby paving the way for democratic ideals amongst them. In the annual session of student union held in Shillong in 1940, Assam Students' Federation, *Surma* Valley Students' Federation and Shillong Students' Federation united together and came under the umbrella of All Assam Students' Confederation where they criticized the imposition of Defence of India Rules by the British Government. However, after few days instead of confederation they used federation. At the same time, the formation of Radical Club in *Guwahati* under the impact of Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI), *Sodou Asom Pragatisil Yuvak* Association (All Assam Progressive Youth Association) also played significant role in building agitational activism amongst the students of Assam towards Marxism and left nationalism. At the same time, it was under the initiatives of the students of Assam, *Assam Socialist Congress* was formed on 29th and 30th January in the year 1940.⁷⁴

Communism helped in organizing youth thereby paving the way for building agitational activism amongst them. However, these ideologies also helped them in articulating interest and building opinion during the particular period of history. The

⁷⁴ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp.115-123. For an understanding of the development of socialist and communist ideology of student activism in Assam, see Amalendu Guha, 1988, *Planter Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle And Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, *op.cit.*, p. 237.

students understood that without economic freedom political sovereignty was worthless and accordingly they fought for both economic and political sovereignty. However, it was seen that the politicization of peasant and labour and their class formation marked the Quite India movement of 1942. The emergence of class consciousness amongst them was reflected through various labour and peasant movements including Assam Boots Company of 1936-37 under the leadership of Bipin Chakravarty, *Jahaj Ghat Labour Movement* under the leadership of Kedar Nath Goswami at *Dibrugarh*, the Assam Oil Company Labour Movement at *Digboi* of 1938-39, the Shillong Municipal Employee Movement. It must be stated here that the student force showed its greater sympathy for these labour movements. It was seen that these movements also had greater impact on students' agitational activism in the state. The students played significant role in uniting labour, peasant and student movements to fight anti-imperialist movement in the state.⁷⁵

The labour and working class movement influenced the students during particular period of the movement and accordingly students became sympathetic towards such movements. At the same time, picketing, strikes and boycotting of schools and colleges were carried out by the students in different places of the state. The members of the Assam Students' Federation were found picketing in front of an exhibition over battle organized by the British Government in *Guwahati* in December, 1941. They also put banners and posters on anti-war nearby to the exhibition as a result of which some students were arrested. But at the same time, students of Cotton College organized processions on 6 December, 1941 as an outcome of physical torture of two cotton college students by District

⁷⁵ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 123-25. Also see Amalendu Guha, 1988, *Planter Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle And Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, *op.cit.*, p. 246.

Commissioner Humphrey Sahab which was participated by the students of Collegiate High School, *Panbaazar* Girls' High School and Bengali High School. Several students were injured out of police atrocities in the procession. However, protests emerged throughout the state against the arrests of student leaders and the influence of Assam Students' Federation which spread to a considerable extent in the province and it was recognized as the rebel student organization. At the same time, one large mass meeting was organized presided over by Nilomoni Phukan where 15,000-20,000 people gathered together and criticized the British Government for arrest and injury of many students. Strikes, boycotting of schools and colleges and processions were formed throughout the state as a mark of dissent. Reference could be made to the *Jorhat* student protest which was remarkable in this regard.⁷⁶ The December Movement of Assam arising out of the event of 6 December 1941 took a popular character against the government. The students received full support of the public, organized associations including Lawyer's Association of Gauhati, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, Kamrup District Labour and Peasant Party and the Bengal Provincial Students' Federation. In Shillong also, schools and colleges remained closed on 8 December, 1941 to mark a protest of it and the striking students were found marching towards the assembly shouting slogans and condemning the police atrocities on the *Guwahati* students. Widespread public resentment over the incident and sympathy with the victims of the police outrage were seen which also reiterated the need for a non-official inquiry into the incident. The extensive public antipathy towards the government on the issue of student harassment by the authority took a dramatic turn which led the legislators to adopt a no confidence

⁷⁶ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 128-31.

motion against the *Sadulla* ministry. Accordingly, *Sadulla* tendered his resignation of his ministry on 12 December, 1941. This was regarded as an example of the biggest impact of youth agitational activism on the governance of the state during the period of the national movement.⁷⁷ After the failure of *Cripps Mission*, the Congress leadership undertook the proposal of *Quit India* demanding the withdrawal of Britishers from the country and accordingly, All India Students' Federation (AISF) conference held at *Patna* where proposal of launching mass movement against the British Government obtained huge support from the students. This AISF conference was also attended by some Assamese students like Gauri Shankar Bhattacharyya, Ramesh Sharma etc. Moreover, Congress leadership also encouraged student force to participate in the movement. Reference could be made to Ballavbhai Pattel who called for the larger participation of the students at *Ahmedabad*. Students were found destroying railway lines, telephone, telegraph lines, doing picketing and strikes during the period of the movement. Boycotting of schools and colleges and arranging processions by the students as a mark of protests became a regular feature of the movement.⁷⁸ Consequently it was understood that the students of Assam were in the fore-front of the anti-war campaign in the province during the period of the *Quit India* Movement in the state. Revolutionary ideals of communism influenced the educated youth of the state along with the youth of the rest of

⁷⁷ For a discussion on December Movement of Assam of 1941, see Anuradha Dutta, 1991, *Assam in the Freedom Struggle*, Calcutta: Dorbari Prokashan, pp. 239-46.

⁷⁸ Ramesh Kalita, 1986, *Bharotor Swadhinota Andolonat Asomor Chatrar Bhumika (1826-1947)*, *op.cit.*, pp. 136-40. For an understanding of larger participation of students in the *Quit India* Movement, see B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, 1947, *The History of the Indian National Congress (1935-47)*, Vol. II, Bombay: Padma Publications, p. 373, Tara Chand, 1983, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. IV, New Delhi: Publication Divisions, Government of India, p. 380. For a discussion on Viceroy Lord Linlithgo's views on student participation in the *Quit India* Movement, see Arun Chandra Bhuyan, 1975, *Quit India Movement: the Second World War and Indian Nationalism*, New Delhi: Manas Publications, p. 87.

the country.⁷⁹ Although agitational activism amongst youth was prominent in this particular period of history, however, study revealed that building association and articulating interest were also high-up within such activism. These also led to the intensification of opinion building amongst them particularly during the period of the movement. Politicization and ideological motivation pushed youth into vigorous activism during the August uprisings in the state. However, in the meantime, the students and teachers of Cotton College had to vacate the campus to make room for the armed forces immediately after the 1942 movement. Guha explained this situation as the suspension for the Cotton College Students' Union Society because of repression, communal dissensions and ideological differences.⁸⁰ At the same time, the Students' Federation divided into three in the state. These were:

- (1) The Assam Provincial Students' federation under RCPI of Soumendranath Tagore which supported the Quite India Movement.
- (2) The other section represented by the new Communist Party of India (CPI).
- (3) The students who started the Assam Students' Congress.⁸¹

However, division of Students' Federation led to the split amongst the students but at the same time, the leaders like Gauri Shankar Bhattacharyya who shifted to Trade Union Movement from student's wing tried to guide the Students' Federation to fight for the national unity but not to play partisan politics. During the period 1945-46 the election of the Cotton College Union Society and its magazine, *The Cottonian* could not be held due to various controversies amongst the students. However, during this period the students

⁷⁹ Arun Chandra Bhuyan, 1975, *Quite India Movement: the Second World War and Indian Nationalism*, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

⁸⁰ Amalendu Guha, 1988, *Planter Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle And Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, *op.cit.*, p.276.

⁸¹ Meeta Deka, 1996, *Student Movements in Assam*, *op.cit.*, p.122.

were found engaging themselves in organizing guerilla activities, the *Santi Sena* or “Peace Brigade” camps in *Guwahati* or *Mrityu Bahini* which aimed at harassing the army troops and causing heavy losses on the government in Assam. It was evident that radical student leaders like Mohendra Hazarika, Lakshikant Goswami and others from *Nagaon* who were being guided by Bengal Volunteer Group consisting of Aswini Kumar Dutta, Kanshi Nath Bhattacharyya and a few others. At the same time, similar organizations were also found forming in other districts of the state but the revolutionaries concentrated more on working as isolated territorial units. However, efforts were also made by the students to sooth the communal rift which was growing during that period. At the same time, the Students’ Federation also tried to assimilate Assam Hill Students’ Federation, a hill student federation into their fold. However, this organization cooperated with the Assam Provincial Students’ Federation which organized the All Assam Students’ Educational Conference in Shillong in 1946. The annual conference of AISF was held in 1944 in *Calcutta* calling for unity amongst students which was attended by 68 delegates from Assam headed by Charu Goswami.⁸² At this conference, Assam was described as “the stronghold of the student movement for the last 15 years.”⁸³ However, it must be stated here that youth agitational activism after the Quite India Movement and till the attainment of independence was deficient in comparison to the pick period of the national movement which stuck only to certain protest demonstrations, collection of funds and observance of 15 December, 1947 as the *Anti-Repression Day* in the *Brahmaputra Valley*. In the post independence period youth activism was seemed to be initiated

⁸² Meeta Deka, 1996, *Student Movements in Assam, op.cit.*, pp. 123-25.

⁸³ *The Student*, Journal of the All India Students’ Federation (AISF), Vol.5, No.1, January 22, 1945, Bombay: New Age Printing Press, p.12.

particularly in the matters of language issue and quest for identity.⁸⁴ However, the Indian Student Movement also accentuated more on redress of specific grievances in the post independence period. As mentioned in the chapter I, Altbach also pointed out the substitution of nationalist fervour of the Indian student movement by generally sporadic agitation aimed at explicit objections in the post independence period.⁸⁵ It was seen that youth in the post independence period were directed mainly towards preservation of the interests of the state. This however, directed the youth activism in the state to agitate for the triumph of regionalism in the post independence period. Accordingly, youth activism during this period was marked by opinion building through various associations building and agitational in the post independence period. Youth activism against the Grouping Plan, West Bengal's Claim, NEFA issue, demand for an Oil Refinery, the language issue, the Federal Plan, Food Crisis, demand to introduce Assamese as the medium of instruction etc. clearly indicated that agitational activism amongst youth was marked by growth of regionalism, economic development of the state and protection of identity of the state.⁸⁶ Although youth were seen agitating for social, economic or political issues, however, the All Assam Students' Association (AASA) of 1960's claimed to be the only non-partisan and non-political student association of that period in the state.

Soon after the independence of the country, the language issue became prominent in the society and politics of Assam. This led to the massive student participation in it. The Bengali students' refusal to accept Assamese as the state language created turmoil in the socio-political identity of Assam. Another big issue of that period in the state was

⁸⁴ Meeta Deka, 1996, *Student Movements in Assam, loc.cit.*

⁸⁵ Philip G. Altbach, 1967, *Student Politics in Bombay*, London: Asia Publishing House, pp. 17-73.

⁸⁶ See for a discussion on various issues over which the students agitated revealed the consciousness of economic development as a process towards regionalism Meeta Deka, 1996, *Student Movements in Assam, op.cit.*, pp. 174-211.

refinery issue. The students took various initiatives for the location of an Oil Refinery in Assam instead of in *Calcutta*. On August 2, 1956, a meeting of about 800 students held in *Gauhati* which criticized the center's policy of industrial development of Assam. The students of Assam observed August 11, 1956 as "All Assam Students Protest Day" demanding the location of the oil refinery in Assam. A general strike was also observed on August 28, 1956 by the students of Assam. Massive democratic means including *hartals*, protest march, strikes were being taken. Such agitational activism of students ultimately led to the establishment of an Oil Refinery in *Gauhati*, Assam.⁸⁷ However, there were several student organizations with party loyalty in the state during that period. There was no student association among the students of Assam independent of allegiance to any political party. This necessitated the formation of a students' body without any party loyalty. The students of Assam also realized that student body's allegiance to political party was the main hindrance in working towards the greater interests of the state. They also felt that a non-political and non-partisan student body with socio-cultural and educational emphasis would be the best to serve the interest of the state.⁸⁸ The non partisan formation of association was high up amid the minds of the students which also indicated association building activism amongst them in the particular period of history. Accordingly, on August 31, 1958 a meeting was held at B. Barooah College participated by student union's secretaries and students of different colleges of the state with Harekrishna Duara in the chair which resulted into the formation of a student union

⁸⁷ Hitesh Deka, *All Assam Students' Union and Its Impact on the Politics of Assam Since 1979*, unpublished thesis submitted for the Degree of Philosophy in the faculty of Arts of Gauhati University, April, 2004, pp.30-1.

⁸⁸ Rukchana Rahman, "Origin of non-party Student Association in Assam", *Proceeding of North-East India History Association*, 30th Session, Nagaon, 2009, pp. 356-63.

without any affiliation to any political party.⁸⁹ It was decided that the student body was to work for the cultural development and moral uplift of the student community.⁹⁰ The meeting formed an ad hoc committee to convene a students' meeting on September 21, 1958 in *Guwahati*. Students from schools, colleges and universities participated in the meeting presided over by Amrit Sing. The meeting discussed the constitution of the students' association and adopted resolution to form an executive body with union secretaries of all the local schools and colleges and university. It also formed a board of conveners with Harekrishna Duara, Bhuban Barua, Aboni Khound, Chandrika Saha and Prafulla Saikia. In 1958, the All *Gauhati* Students' Union (AGSU) without any political bias was formed.⁹¹ This led to the formation of All Assam Students' Association (AASA) in 1959 with Biman Kar as the President, Bhuboneswar Buzarbaruah and Khirod Baruah as Vice-President, Bhuban Thakur as General Secretary, Lakhikanta Saikia as Organizational Secretary, Amrit Sing as Treasurer and Prafulla Chandra Baruah as Magazine Secretary. AASA had a mouth piece namely "*Mukhapatra*" which was first published in February 1961. The main objectives of the association were to build a non-partisan students movement, to maintain cordial relations with student unions and student organizations as means to fostering unity with the general students interest of the country, to work for the welfare of the students in various fields such as cultural, games, sport and literature and lastly to represent the common problems of the students collectively.⁹² The first convention of AASA was held at the G.T.C. ground facing the idyllic

⁸⁹ Assam Police Abstract of Intelligence, 1958 as cited in Meeta Deka, 1996, *Student Movements in Assam*, *op.cit.*, p. 165.

⁹⁰ *The Assam Tribune*, September 2, 1958.

⁹¹ Hitesh Deka, 2004, *All Assam Students' Union and Its Impact on the Politics of Assam Since 1979*, *op.cit.*, pp. 31-2.

⁹² Recorded interview with Prafulla Chandra Baruah, Magazine Secretary of AASA of 1959-60 on 25.04.2009 in Guwahati.

Dighalipukhuri, Guwahati on 20th September, 1959. As many as 150 delegates from different educational institutions of the state attended the two-day convention. The convention adopted certain resolutions, according to its constitutions to foster unity among students of Assam and also to build up a non-partisan and non-political student organization in Assam to protect just interests.⁹³

The agitational activism amongst the students of Assam was prominent through AASA in the language movement in 1960. The AASA representing the students played a major role in language controversy of Assam. On March 22, 1960 a deputation of the newly formed AASA led by Bhuban Thakur and Bhuboneswar Buzarbaruah presented a memorandum to the Assam's Chief Minister demanding declaration of Assamese as the state language. This deputation produced a spark to the great language controversy in Assam, followed by a series of processions and protest meetings by the students of Assam.⁹⁴ At *Barpeta*, on March 26, 1960, people organized public meetings demanding Assamese as the state language of Assam in which students also participated in huge numbers. At the same time, Gauhati Students' Federation also organized public meeting where they adopted resolution to form Gauhati Students' Action Committee consisting of representatives of various students' organizations of Assam on April 2, 1960. This Committee was to decide the future line of action of the biggest controversies in Assam politics-the language controversy. On July 4, 1960, an incident marked the climax of language movement in which Ranjit Barpujari, a student of Cotton College was killed and many others were injured. This incident ignited the sentiments of the entire student community and there were protests across the state against the killing of Ranjit

⁹³ *The Assam Tribune*, September, 21, 1959.

⁹⁴ Meeta Deka, 1996, *Student Movements in Assam*, *op.cit.*, p.166.

Borpujari.⁹⁵ The students of *Gauhati University* under the leadership of Dulal Baruah, General Secretary, Post Graduate Students' Union (PGSU) also participated in the agitation in a large scale.⁹⁶ At the same time, protests mounted in the districts of *Barak Valley* like *Cachar*, *Hailakandi* and *Karimganj* against the demand for Assamese as the state language which resulted into the death of 11 students at *Hailakandi* in June, 1961. This incident also promoted protest at *Cachar* district resulting into the resignation of Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from their posts.⁹⁷ The AASA supported *Asom Sahitya Sobha*, the literary organization of the state in the language movement. The state government issued a circular against the involvement of students in the language movement but AASA opposed the circular and they organized meetings, passed resolutions and met government officials including Chief Minister regarding the language issue.⁹⁸ Accordingly, agitational activism of students succeeded in granting Assamese the legal status of the state language amid massive opposition from vested quarters.⁹⁹ AASA, the only state based non-political student association of that period did not have strict organizational structure, however, it had its strong holds in the places like *Sibsagarh*, *Mongoldoi* and *Majuli*. Infact, after the dysfunctional of state level AASA, the district level AASA in *Sibsagarh* remained for many years which had a strong hold in the

⁹⁵ Hitesh Deka, 2004, *All Assam Students' Union and Its Impact on the Politics of Assam Since 1979*, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

⁹⁶ Pulakesh Baruah, "Dulaldak Log Pua Muhurtar Duta-Ata Smriti", in Hemanta Kalita (Ed.), 2008, *Raijor Apun Dulal Baruah*, Jorhat: Asom Singha Dulal Chandra Baruah Smriti Raksha Prastuti Samiti, p. 28.

⁹⁷ Hitesh Deka, 2004, *All Assam Students' Union and Its Impact on the Politics of Assam Since 1979*, *op.cit.*, pp. 31-2.

⁹⁸ Recorded interview with Prafulla Chandra Baruah, Magazine Secretary of AASA of 1959-60 on 25.04.2009 in Guwahati.

⁹⁹ Hitesh Deka, 2004, *All Assam Students' Union and Its Impact on the Politics of Assam Since 1979*, *loc.cit.*

district.¹⁰⁰ The *Sibsagarh* AASA adopted certain issues like local representation in the companies like Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and local industrialization.¹⁰¹ In the Chinese aggression of 1962 also, the student association played an important role throughout the state in moulding public opinion against China. Moreover in this connection, it also published a book in collaboration with ex-president of *Asom Sahitya Sobha* Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya.¹⁰² During the period of aggression, the student representatives of AASA organized meetings and went to many places of the state to give free social service. It also helped the administration during aggression period.¹⁰³ Consequently, youth activism under the banner of AASA was also prominent in opinion building in this particular period of history. Accordingly analysis revealed that AASA as a non-partisan student association during the period of its existence was successful in building activism amongst the students which were association building, opinion building, articulating interest and agitational of its kind.

As ASSA was the only non-political student organization of that period, it had directly or indirectly no relation with the political party of the state. Usually, its office bearers were the genuine students of different educational institutions of the state. The administration of the state also gave sufficient importance to the various demands of the association. The diverse activities adopted by the student association influenced the socio-cultural field of the state. They undertook various steps for the improvement of the academic and socio-cultural atmosphere of the state. However, there were many factors

¹⁰⁰ Recorded interview with Prafulla Chandra Baruah, Magazine Secretary of AASA of 1959-60 on 25.04.2009 in Guwahati.

¹⁰¹ Recorded interview with Dr. Bhabesh Chandra Bhuyan, Member, District Secretary, *Sibsagarh* AASA of 1959-60 on 08.05.2009 in Guwahati.

¹⁰² Recorded interview with Guna Baruah, General Secretary, *Sibsagarh* AASA and Member of the Executive Committee of AASA of 1960-61 on 31.07.2009 at *Sibsagarh*.

¹⁰³ Recorded interview with Prafulla Chandra Baruah, Magazine Secretary of AASA of 1959-60 on 25.04.2009 in Guwahati.

which forced AASA into a shell. It mainly went into oblivion for lack of financial assistance. The association had no fund to start their branches at different places of the state. But they also did not collect money to strengthen their association. However, the branches of the places like *Sibsagarh, Mongoldoi, Jorhat* were being formed with the initiative of the local students. Since AASA was a non-political and non-partisan student association, the financial assistance from any political party was naturally unthinkable. At the same time, the lack of professional approach amongst the members of AASA was also responsible for the dysfunction of the association. During that period, there were mainly two issues in Assam politics-the issue of Assamese as the state language and unification of North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) with Assam and the demand for making Assamese as the medium of education in NEFA. But in these two important issues, the *Asom Sahitya Sobha* took the leading part and AASA supported *Sobha* in their initiative. Accordingly, the role of AASA in these issues became limited. The lack of leadership capability amongst the new members of AASA also made it a defunct body.¹⁰⁴ Though the association did not lead any movement in Assam but it represented the students of Assam as the only non-political student association of that period. At the same time, it had a broader perspective of inclusion. Moreover, AASA as the lone student association became able to shape the nationality question in Assam during that period. In a nutshell being a non-partisan student association, it touched all aspects of state's socio-cultural, political, economic and educational which indicated its significance in the society and politics of Assam during that period of history. Therefore, the study of this aspect of student association has become important to have a better understanding of the

¹⁰⁴ Recorded interview with Prafulla Chandra Baruah, Magazine Secretary of AASA of 1959-60 on 25.04.2009 in Guwahati.

nature of student association and non-partisan student activism in Assam of various kinds.¹⁰⁵ The period of AASA has been regarded as the dark period in the history of youth activism in Assam which has not been studied much before. However, youth agitational activism in the state was also found holding strongly the food crisis in the year 1966.¹⁰⁶ The Food Crisis Movement was led by the students like Dilip Bhattacharyya, General Secretary, Jorhat Law College, Lakshmi Kanta Saikia, General Secretary of Post Graduate Students' Union (PGSU), Sushil Goswami, General Secretary, Cotton College. The students put pressure on the government to deal with the crisis situation arising out of food crisis, draughts, floods, pests and increase in population. A group of student delegates consisting of 10-12 students headed by Sushil Goswami met then Prime Minister and the Power Minister in Delhi and discussed about the grave condition of the state. However, during that period the idea for the formation of All Assam Students' Union was developed in the minds of the student leaders and they conceived the idea in a student conference of the All Gauhati Inter-College Students' Union held at *Jalukbari* on 1st July, 1966. On October 2nd, 1966, All Assam Students' Union (AASU) ad hoc committee was formed in a student meeting held at Jorhat District Library which was participated by most of the General Secretaries of the colleges of the province. Lakhi Kanta Saikia was elected as the first President, Sushil Goswami as the Vice-President and Dilip Bhattacharyya as the General Secretary of the AASU ad hoc committee. The second conference of AASU held at *Tezpur* where Bharot Lohar was elected as the General Secretary. Significantly, the students of *Barak Valley* also participated in the

¹⁰⁵ Rukchana Rahman, "Origin of non-party Student Association in Assam", *Proceeding of North-East India History Association*, 2009, *op.cit.*, p. 362.

¹⁰⁶ Shikhar Kumar Sharma, "All Assam Students' Union (AASU)", in Basanta Deka, (Ed.), 2009, *Assam: Land and People*, Guwahati: K.C. Das Commerce College, pp. 376-85.

conference. It must be noted here that AASU was formed mainly with the intention of establishing social justice and to contribute to the process of social change with a non-political outlook which again meant without party loyalty.¹⁰⁷ The central committee of the organization was formed and AASU constitution was adopted on August 8, 1967 in the *Tezpur* Convention of AASU. It was found that the main objectives of the student organization were to form an organization to establish social, economic and political justice, freedom of thought and equal status, respect for individuals and national unity and dedication towards the establishment of brotherhood and unite the entire community irrespective of cast, creed and religion.¹⁰⁸ It must be noted here that agitational activism amongst youth was prevalent particularly from time to time in the form of protest against the federal plan during the period. However, agitational activism under the banner of AASU was widespread in the medium of instruction movement of 1972, the 21-point charter of demands of 1974 and the 18-point of demands of 1978.

Under the threat of being minority in respect of their socio-cultural existence, the Assamese community and the students in particular launched agitation demanding Assamese as the main medium of instruction in the state in 1972. The AASU submitted a memorandum to the Vice-Chancellor demanding: (i) medium of instruction and examination should be in Assamese (ii) in the Pre-University classes, it should be effective from 1972-73 and the degree classes from 1974-75 (iii) English should be the alternative medium up to 1978 (iv) question papers should be in Assamese and English (v) no district should be treated separately. Although the movement was started by AASU

¹⁰⁷ Recorded Interview with Dr. Sushil Goswami, Founder Vice-President of All Assam Students' Union (AASU) of 1967-68 on 29.04.2009 in Guwahati.

¹⁰⁸ Shikhar Kumar Sharma, "All Assam Students' Union (AASU)", in Basanta Deka, (Ed.), 2009, *Assam: Land and People*, *op.cit.*, pp. 376-85.

but it was joined by the organizations like the Assam College Teachers' Association and the Gauhati University Teachers' Association. Under the leadership of AASU, the movement took a violent turn with *Gana-Satyagraha* (peoples' insistence on truth), strikes, meetings and observance of Demand Day to press *Gauhati University* for immediate implementation of its decisions. This agitational activism under AASU became able to generate a strong sense of Assamese nationalism particularly in the *Brahmaputra Valley* because the issues raised by AASU were related to the question of existence of Assam and the Assamese speaking people. However, the death of the student leaders like Muzammil Haque, Anil Bora, Promod Bora and Bolin Rajkhowa made the situation more tensed during the movement. Violence erupted in the places like *Guwahati*, *Nagaon* and *Dibrugarh*. Nevertheless, with the Prime-Minister's visit and request AASU called off the movement with the sense of confidence of the Chief Minister and the Government of Assam that the November 11, 1972 statement of assurance would be implemented with due honour. Although the movement subsidized in two valleys with the adoption of a formal resolution by the Assam Legislative Assembly of withdrawing its earlier decision on medium of instruction and proposal for establishing a separate university in *Cachar* district, however, the strong consequence of agitational activism was prevalent which was also instrumental in influencing the democratic politics of the state. Agitational activism was again instituted in the form of AASU's 21-Points Charter of Demands in 1974 which reflected mostly the economic problems. This was the result of thorough research made by AASU about the prevailing situation of the state in the context of the country's development and progresses. Although this charter of demands emphasized mostly on economic considerations however, broader socio-

political and geographical perspectives also were taken care of by it. Interest articulation of youth activism was prominent during this period of history. This was considered as the first effort on the part of the youth in bringing forward the problems of the state in organized ways which led to a massive movement involving youth agitational activism. The day of submission of the charter was observed by AASU as the protest day throughout the state against the government's failure in mitigating the important issues. Street corner meetings were organized and processions were formed explaining the clauses of charter of demands to the public. The protest was intensified by AASU with the failure of discussion with the government. Although no substantial success was achieved on the implementation of the charter of demands however, the charter was recognized as the formalizing the lookouts of the state and it envisioned the state's future. At the same time, 18-Point Charter of Demands of AASU of July, 1978 which was regarded as the continuation of the earlier 21-Point Charter of Demands, however, newly defined and rectified point regarding the demand of deporting the illegal foreigners was considered as the most important point in the entire history of Assam raised by the youth. AASU focused on the importance of detecting the illegal citizens of Assam and on October 1978. It made an appeal thereby saying that the illegal citizens had no right to stay in India according to the 1955 Citizenship Act.¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, interest articulation was high up in the youth activism of the state during the period which also asked for opinion building amongst people. Activism amongst youth touched its highest point during the period of anti-foreigners movement in 1979-85 which was regarded as the longest student movement of its kind not only of North-East but the country as a whole.

¹⁰⁹ Hitesh Deka, 2004, *All Assam Students' Union and Its Impact on the Politics of Assam Since 1979*, *op.cit.*, pp. 44-52.

The foreign national movement in Assam led by the students under the banner of AASU showed agitational activism of youth thereby shaping the nationality consciousness of the whole society.¹¹⁰ The issues of the prevention of foreign national's participation in the electoral process of Assam, protection of distinct socio-cultural, economic and political identity of the Assamese nationality were raised by the student which found acceptance both from the masses and the government. This also found recognition as a national problem. The movement which was fought largely outside the traditional party leadership, an effective organizational network with *Asom Sahitya Sabha* and *All Asom Gana Sangram Parishad*, another elite wing of the movement was built with the old organizational network of AASU.¹¹¹ However, the students maintained its autonomy and separate identity during the period of the movement.¹¹² It was also viewed that through their vast organizational network, the AASU leadership mobilized masses to a considerable extent through various protest actions and resistance thereby building public opinion. Agitational activism was found fabricating to its highest extent during the period of the movement in the form of *satyagrahas*, blocking of roads, protests organized to resist the flow of crude oil to outside Assam, *gheraos* (encirclement) of candidates standing for the *Lok-Sabha* election of 1980, forming processions and mass rallies thereby violating curfew orders and other prohibitory orders and also opposing the bloody election of 1983.¹¹³ This movement under strong youth activism of different kinds was successful in signing accord with the Government of India popularly known as

¹¹⁰ Apurba K. Baruah, "Approaches to the Study of Student Movements in North-East India", in Apurba K. Baruah, (Ed.), 2002, *Student Power in North-East India*, *op.cit.*, p.15.

¹¹¹ Monirul Hussain, 1993, *The Assam Movement Class, Ideology and identity*, New Delhi: Manak Publications, p.7.

¹¹² S.L. Baruah, 2007, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, *op.cit.*, p. 657.

¹¹³ Monirul Hussain, 1993, *The Assam Movement Class, Ideology and identity*, *loc.cit.*

Assam Accord in 1985. Therefore, the Assam Movement was significant for youth activism which showed the greater seeds of agitational, interest articulation and opinion building activism of youth during the period of the movement.

Youth activism in Assam has been a fact of history from time to time having strong consequences on the political and socio-economic facets of the province. However, the activism amongst youth in the pre-independence period diverges at different levels from the youth activism of post independence period in the state. While in the pre-independence period the youth were seen in participating in the national movement in large scale however, initiation and leadership were vested in the hands of the elder age group people. However association building amongst youth was instrumental in the growth and development of literary organizations and other organizations and associations during the pre-independence period also. This also led towards articulating interest and building public opinion in the state during that period of history. These various associations also led youth to participate in the national movement in its various phases thereby promoting agitational activism amongst them. Most of the student organizations whether having party allegiance or non-partisan were formed during the period of the national movement which also helped in the growth of youth activism of different kinds. However, in the post-independence period youth were found taking leadership in most of the movements which were directed towards regional development, pursuit of identity and economic development of the province which were considered as the result of the threat in the reduction of the size of the state. Youth resorted to different movements for bringing about changes in social, economic or political spheres of the state. The huge mass appeal and support received by such youth movements particularly

in the post-independence period could easily be attributed towards the hegemonic¹¹⁴ position of the youth leaders of these movements during the particular period of each movement in the post independence period. However, the hegemony of the students particularly during the period of the Assam Movement was ubiquitous in the state which demonstrated the student force as the representative of the entire people of the state.¹¹⁵ However, it must be noted here that it became possible due to the student's competence of being conscious of economic development of the province towards the attainment of the process of regionalism in the state. The formation of *Asom Gana Parishad* (AGP), the first regional political party in Assam which came to power immediately after the movement in 1985, consisting of the leaders of the movement was also indicative of the same. However, youth activism under AASU continues to maintain its non-partisan stance in terms of the party politics in Assam. Yet it has been playing a key role in the politics of the state till present period since its inception.

¹¹⁴ See for a discussion on theory of Hegemony, Antonio Gramsci, 1979, *Selection from the Prison Note Books of Antonio Gramsci*, New York: International Publishers.

¹¹⁵ For a discussion on student's hegemony in the Assam Movement, see Apurba K. Baruah, "Approaches to the Study of Student Movements in North-East India", in Apurba K. Baruah, (Ed.), 2002, *Student Power in North-East India, op.cit.*, pp. 1-20.

